



SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY  
division

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Chair of the Professional Board for Psychology

Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)

### PROPOSED TRAINING FRAMEWORK FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS

We, the South African Association of Counselling Psychologists (SAACP), a division of the South African Association of Counselling Psychology (PsySSA), congratulate and stand in solidarity with the Board's focus on improving access to mental healthcare services for the broader South African population. But we are strongly opposed to the Board's proposed training pathways for psychologists in achieving this goal. We believe that reducing the training period to 4 or 5 years with a generalist focus, will prevent these trainees from adequately developing the sophisticated skillset required in psychological assessment, psychological therapies and professional practice to competently perform as psychologists in independent practice.

One important focus in the Board's goal to increase access to mental healthcare services, should be to realize and optimize the breadth of scope and expertise of Counselling Psychologists, who up until recently have managed misinformed, inaccurate misrepresentations of our skillsets. Counselling Psychologists' training focuses on a broad range of diagnostic, assessment and therapeutic interventions, including a strong focus on cultural competencies and community psychology interventions - which are partnership-orientated, promoting mental health needs within a social liberation model that emphasizes the impact of social and structural inequalities.

This is an ideal position to work from within primary intervention care teams where Counselling Psychologists should be positioned in lead roles supervising the implementation of mental health literacy programmes, distress prevention and remediation efforts. One initial avenue would be the introduction of a one-year compulsory community service (similar to the strategy followed by Clinical Psychologists) immediately after internship for each Counselling Psychologist, which would channel expertise into more senior roles in healthcare later on.

The latest Counselling Psychologist workforce data reveals a significant underutilisation and poor distribution of Counselling Psychologists within our healthcare system. While addressing the shortage of mental healthcare practitioners is paramount, it's crucial to acknowledge that our current resources are being misallocated. Specifically, there's a notable lack of posts for Counselling Psychologists outside of private practice settings. This prompts the question: should the Board's focus not be on enhancing the integration and utilisation of existing practitioners within the healthcare system, rather than training a surplus of 'general psychologists' who may ultimately gravitate towards private practice due to limited alternative avenues?

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